

# Stimulants

## Nicotine (Tobacco)

Cigarettes, Darts, Smokes,  
Chew, Dips

### What is it?

Nicotine is the active drug in cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, and vape juice or e-juice. Nicotine occurs naturally in the tobacco plant. Vaporizer liquids, gum, patches, inhalers and lozenges contain synthetic nicotine. Nicotine speeds up the brain, heart, and lungs, but most people who use it report a calming affect.

### Why do people use it?

- ◆ For ceremonial and spiritual purposes
- ◆ To relax, increase focus and attention, take a break, or socialize with friends and co-workers
- ◆ To cope with stress, anxiety, or uncomfortable emotions

### What can go wrong?

- ◆ Smoking can cause cancers in the lungs, mouth, throat, sinuses, stomach, etc.
- ◆ As the number of people who smoke goes down, and rules around where smoking is allowed increase, social isolation becomes a greater risk.
- ◆ Other heart and lung diseases can affect even occasional or light smokers.

### How does it work?

Nicotine stimulates the brain, heart, and lungs increasing alertness and focus. Many people say that nicotine relaxes them, despite it being a stimulant. This could be due to some of the other behaviors associated with smoking (going outside, separating from a crowd, taking deep breaths), The calming affect can also be explained by nicotine withdrawal which causes irritability, anxiety and agitation; therefore, using nicotine temporarily stops withdrawal.

Information adapted from  
[heretohelp.ca](http://heretohelp.ca), [camh.ca](http://camh.ca)  
& [towardtheheart.com](http://towardtheheart.com)

For more information  
visit their websites.

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## Harm Reduction

1. Nicotine overdose is rare but possible; most common is if using two forms of nicotine at the same time (e.g. smoking while wearing a patch). Nausea, vomiting, feeling faint or light headed, and skin irritation are all signs of overdose. If symptoms appear, call poison control, the nurses' hotline 8-1-1, or go to your nearest emergency room.
2. Cigars, and cigarillos are sometimes seen as less harmful than cigarettes, but this isn't true. All tobacco products have harmful and cancer causing chemicals.
3. Chewing tobacco is less harmful for your lungs than smoking, but it increases the risk of oral cancers.
4. Sharing cigarettes or smoking butts found in ashtrays or on the side walk is not recommended. If you are getting tobacco this way, it is safer to empty the unburnt tobacco into a rolling paper.

## Want to quit?

- ◆ Most BC residents are able to access free nicotine replacement therapy (gum, patches, lozenges, or inhalers). Any pharmacist can help you get started.
- ◆ Quitnow.ca offers 1-1 support, education, and quit planning resources. Talk with a Quit Coach by phoning toll-free 1-877-455-2233.
- ◆ Talk to a friend, parent, teacher, counsellor or doctor for extra help.

### **Discovery** Youth & Family Substance Use Services

Victoria/South Island: 250-519-5313

Cowichan Valley: 250-737-2029

Nanaimo/Ladysmith: 250-739-5790

Oceanside area: 250-947-8215

Mt Waddington area: 250-902-6063

